

Effect of the Economy on Housing Choices

February 2009

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Report written by
Jean Koppen, Senior Research Advisor
Member Value Research
Knowledge Management

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Washington, D.C. 20049
www.aarp.org

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Background and Methodology

The purpose of this study was to gather information on people's experiences and thoughts on how the current economic recession has affected their housing situations and decisions.

This study took place in three phases. Phase I included an omnibus survey of 1016 respondents conducted in September 2008 by Opinion Research Corporation. Phase II consisted of focus group research in November 2008. Phase III was a combined qualitative/quantitative study conducted in December 2008 via the internet by Phi Power.

The three phases are presented separately here with conclusions and recommendations for further research.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The purpose of this three-phased research was to gather initial direction to inform further research in 2009 on people's experiences and thoughts on how the current economic recession has affected their housing situations and decisions. As a result of this research, certain topics resonate more than others and warrant further exploration.

- People are obviously experiencing difficulties because of the economy. In research efforts it is important to be as specific as possible in questioning. For example, if interested in how people are cutting back on home modifications, questions should specifically probe this area so that people do not include other types of cutting back on expenses, such as reducing utility expenditures. It would be important to correlate the types of economic changes people are making with their type of household and with any specific economic issues they have experienced (loss of job, reduction in income, etc.).
- Reasons for staying in one's home in retirement verses moving are interesting and seem to change depending on their retirement status. For example, those who have not yet retired seem to be more inclined to want to move, compared to those who have already retired. Further research needs to be done on retirement desires based on how close respondents are to retirement. Further exploration on how people weigh competing desires (i.e. warmer climate verses staying near family) may also be enlightening.
- People have strong emotions concerning having relatives live with them (both positive and negative), and a good proportion of respondents (in qualitative and quantitative research) have lived in this type of situation. Further research should investigate the factors that may influence an overall positive or negative experience.

Phase I

September 2008 Omnibus Study with Opinion Research Corporation; 1016 respondents ages 45-64.

- Overall, the majority of boomers want to stay in their current homes as they age (79% strongly/somewhat agree). Older boomers (83%) are more likely to say they want to stay than younger boomers are (76%).
- Respondents are also very confident that they will be able to stay in their homes as they age. Eighty-five percent say it is very or somewhat likely that they will be able to stay. Older boomers (55-64) are significantly more likely than younger boomers to say it is likely they will be able to stay in their homes (88% vs. 83%).
- The respondents who said they would like to move or will likely need to move were asked specifically how they thought their living situation would change in the future. The top responses included moving into a home all on one level (59%), moving into a newer home (50%), or moving into a smaller home (50%). Older boomers are significantly more likely than younger boomers to think that they will move into a single level home (68% vs. 54%). A few gender differences emerged as well. Men are more likely than women to believe they will move into a newer home (61% vs. 42%) or move into a home in a warmer/better climate (41% vs. 25%). Women are more likely than men to believe they will move into a smaller home (54% vs. 41%).
- Finally, all of the respondents were asked what parts of the home they thought would make it challenging to stay in their current housing situation as they aged. A third (33%) believed that no part of the home would make it challenging to stay, while a quarter (25%) believed the stairs would be the most challenging feature. Women were significantly more likely than men to believe that stairs (29% vs. 20%), the entrance (8% vs. 5%), and the bathtub/shower (5% vs. 3%) would make it difficult to stay in their homes.

Annotated Questionnaire

Please note, all data are given in percentages. Asterisks indicate that cell size is negligible. Not all percentages will add up to 100 due to rounding.

- A1 Thinking about your current housing situation and preferences for the future, please tell me if you strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree, or strongly disagree with the following statement: What I'd really like to do is stay in my current residence for as long as possible.

| (n=1016) | Total | Gender | | Age | |
|-----------------------|-------|--------|-------|------------|------------|
| | | Men | Women | 45-54 | 55-64 |
| Agree (Net) | 79% | 80% | 79% | 76% | 83% |
| Strongly Agree | 65 | 63 | 66 | 60 | 70 |
| Somewhat Agree | 15 | 17 | 13 | 16 | 13 |
| Disagree (Net) | 20 | 20 | 21 | 24 | 16 |
| Somewhat Disagree | 9 | 9 | 8 | 10 | 7 |
| Strongly Disagree | 12 | 11 | 12 | 14 | 9 |
| DK | * | 1 | * | 0 | 1 |

Bolded pairs are significantly different at the $p < .05$ level

- A2 Now, please tell me how LIKELY you think it is that you will be able to stay in your current home as you get older? Do you think it is...
[READ LIST. RECORD ONE ANSWER]

| (n=1016) | Total | Gender | | Age | |
|-----------------------|-------|--------|-------|------------|------------|
| | | Men | Women | 45-54 | 55-64 |
| Likely (Net) | 85% | 87% | 83% | 83% | 88% |
| Very Likely | 62 | 64 | 61 | 60 | 65 |
| Somewhat Likely | 23 | 23 | 22 | 22 | 23 |
| Unlikely (Net) | 15 | 13 | 16 | 17 | 12 |
| Not Too Likely | 8 | 7 | 10 | 9 | 7 |
| Not at all Likely | 6 | 6 | 6 | 7 | 5 |
| DK | 1 | * | 1 | 1 | 1 |

Bolded pairs are significantly different at the $p < .05$ level

Combination Table of Desire to Stay in Home and Likelihood of Staying In Home

| (n=1016) | Total | Gender | | Age | |
|--|-------|--------|-------|------------|------------|
| | | Men | Women | 45-54 | 55-64 |
| Want to Stay in Home and Will be Likely to Be Able To Stay | 73% | 74% | 71% | 69% | 78% |
| Want to Leave Home but Will be Likely Be Able To Stay | 12 | 12 | 12 | 14 | 10 |
| Want to Stay in Home but is Unlikely To Be Able to Stay | 6 | 5 | 8 | 7 | 5 |
| Want to Leave Home and is Unlikely To Be Able to Stay | 8 | 8 | 8 | 9 | 7 |
| DK | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |

Bolded pairs are significantly different at the $p < .05$ level

[ASK IF A1 (03-04) OR A2 (03-04)]

A3 How do you think your living situation will change in the future? Will you...
 [READ LIST. RECORD AS MANY AS APPLY. WAIT FOR YES OR NO FOR EACH. RANDOMIZE]

| (n=273) | Total | Gender | | Age | |
|--|-------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| | | Men | Women | 45-54 | 55-64 |
| Structure of Home (Net) | 89% | 85% | 92% | 89% | 90% |
| Move into a home all on one level | 59 | 58 | 60 | 54 | 68 |
| Move to a newer home | 50 | 61 | 42 | 54 | 44 |
| Move into a smaller home | 49 | 41 | 54 | 44 | 58 |
| Move into a larger home | 28 | 32 | 25 | 31 | 22 |
| Setting/Location of Home (Net) | 63 | 62 | 63 | 61 | 66 |
| Move closer to family or friends | 34 | 28 | 39 | 32 | 38 |
| Move into a home in a warmer climate or overall better climate | 32 | 41 | 25 | 32 | 32 |
| Move into a retirement community | 18 | 15 | 21 | 17 | 20 |
| Move in with family or friends | 12 | 10 | 14 | 12 | 11 |
| Other | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 |
| None/DK | 4 | 8 | 2 | 6 | 4 |

Bolded pairs are significantly different at the $p < .05$ level

Base: Respondents who disagree that they would like to stay in current residence for as long as possible or say they are not likely to be able to stay in current home as they get older

- A4 What parts of your home do you anticipate will make it challenging to stay in your CURRENT housing situation as you age?
 [DO NOT READ LIST. RECORD AS MANY AS APPLY]

| (n=1016) | Total | Gender | | Age | |
|--|-------|-----------|-----------|-------|-------|
| | | Men | Women | 45-54 | 55-64 |
| Stairs | 25 | 20 | 29 | 25 | 24 |
| Yard/Landscaping | 11 | 9 | 13 | 12 | 10 |
| Bedroom on the upper floor | 8 | 7 | 9 | 7 | 9 |
| Entrance of home (steps, accessibility) | 6 | 5 | 8 | 6 | 7 |
| Toilet/bathroom issues other than bathtub/shower | 4 | 4 | 5 | 4 | 5 |
| Getting in and out of the bathtub or shower | 4 | 3 | 5 | 4 | 4 |
| Narrow doorways or hallways | 2 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 3 |
| Flooring | 2 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 1 |
| Garage | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Lighting | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Other | 19 | 23 | 16 | 19 | 20 |
| None | 33 | 35 | 31 | 33 | 32 |
| DK | 5 | 5 | 4 | 4 | 5 |

Bolded pairs are significantly different at the $p < .05$ level

Phase II

November 2008 qualitative research: two focus groups with respondents ages 45-64.

Summary

- Intergenerational living is one topic that seemed interesting to respondents – most respondents had experienced living with an adult child or parent and there is room to probe on their opinions about this experience.
- Universal design is something to be explored as well, including other modern building features such as homes with two master suites. However, it is important to narrow down the focus and language on a survey; probing respondents on the language they use to talk about this subject would be highly beneficial.
- Finally, it is important to ask about what people are “not” doing with their homes because of the economy, specifically in regards to home modification and putting off major decisions.

Topline Findings

Effects of Economy on Housing Decisions

Respondents shared how the economic downturn has resulted mostly in “holding back” from making housing changes. Some are trying to sell their home or are putting off selling and/or buying a home (and in some cases moving). Most have delayed making home modifications and improvements, and have decided to “sit tight” until it seems a better time to move forward. In one case, a respondent had desired to get a home equity line of credit to help a child purchase a house but decided against doing so because of the economy. Some are not confident overall about having the money they need to live comfortably in retirement.

We sold one house at a loss, significant loss. That combined with the fact that both my wife and I aren't working regular jobs right now that's held us off from buying another house in a different community.

I've held off on making improvements to the house because I don't know if I would get the value back. I'd like to redo my master bathroom. I'm afraid that I wouldn't get the money back should we decide to move. Everyone is a little concerned about the economy now to put it mildly.

My husband and I had thought back and forth about downsizing. We have lived in our current home for 40 years. It's a tri-level so there are stairs involved . . . With the housing market the way it is and the prices of home we've decided not to sell at this time, just gonna hang out and stay where we are. [Plans] are on hold for now . . . now we're just gonna sit tight and see if the housing market improved. It's just kind of a difficult situation right now.

We don't have major things to do, we're just not doing things we would have liked to do a long time ago, taking the carpeting out, painting rooms. Things we'd normally have someone else do, we're thinking of picking up paint cans and doing it ourselves.

I have an equity line of credit and I wanted to help out one of my kids to put a down payment on a house. And then the value of my house went down and so did my line of credit. So I couldn't do it. [What happened to your child?] He's on hold right now. They're trying to save, and they're putting their money away. . . I need some cushion too in case something happens.

Trying to figure out how I'm going to make it is a struggle.

While most respondents were not in dire housing situations, a few were experiencing housing difficulties as a result of the economy related to job loss. One respondent has her mother and grandchildren living with her and would like to make her home more wheelchair accessible, but her husband's recent work reduction has put that on hold. Another respondent has a high income, but his lifestyle is dependent on two incomes and his wife has lost her job. In addition, their second vacation home is experiencing fewer rentals and they could soon be in a difficult situation.

We were going to try to modify our house to help my help my mom get around in a wheelchair. And then my husband's job also was shortened this year in half so we can't do that. . . We just put the ramp in and that's about as far as we got. As far as the bathroom, we couldn't. We're thinking we're either going to have to sell it or lose it because it's not going to work. Otherwise my mom stays in one spot all the time. Our house is not that big.

We have a small condo up in Lake Geneva, sort of a second vacation getaway place that we rent it out about 98 percent of the time. We weren't trying to make money off it or anything. We just want the rentals to cover the mortgage. And the rentals are way down so people are not spending the money vacationing. . . . Normally we didn't have to worry about paying the mortgage out of our own pocket, but we do now so that's a strain. That on top

of my wife losing her job it's creating some financial difficulty. . . We could sell it but nobody's buying.

The American Dream

While respondents do agree that owning one's own home (and moving to the suburbs) has been the American Dream, they also acknowledged that the relationship between people and their homes has changed considerably since they first owned a home. Some specifically discussed the downturn in the economy as affecting people's housing situation, while others talked about changed expectations towards housing as an issue with younger generations.

I think everyone hopes that once they retire they'll own their own homes so they won't have a mortgage to worry about. I think everyone considers homeownership a sign of status and being well off.

I agree - that [the suburbs] was the ideal place to go and be safe. Now our kids are going to the suburbs too

When we first got married I was scared as heck to buy a house. My wife wanted a house and once we got a house I thought it was cool, my own four walls. . . . I as born and raised in the city, but when I moved out, I thought it was cool.

In today's day and age where everybody's losing their home, that's the American nightmare. If you plan well and buy what you can afford and keep your job in this economy, then it is the American dream. But today it can be somebody's worst nightmare. And I know several people who are in it.

Years ago when we bought our first home, the main thing on our mind was making our payments and pay this off as soon as we can. Then I consider we own our home, once it's paid for. The people that buy homes nowadays, especially these huge mansions they can't afford, have no intentions of ever paying that home off. All they care about is how much their monthly payments are going to be and it's just a place to live. It's not their home. I think the values have changed on that.

We're at a point where my wife keeps saying I would love to have that deed in our hands to say I own the house outright as opposed to refinancing every so often. Our parents bought outright. I've always heard that you shouldn't pay

your house off all the way for some reason because it's not good for you financially. But my wife and I are on the other side of that. We want that deed.

Intergenerational Living

Some respondents have had or are currently experiencing an adult child returning home, or in one case never leaving home. While this usually happens for economic reasons, it is not necessarily specifically related to the current economic crisis. Some respondents have had (or currently have) a parent living with them, most often for medical reasons but also influenced by financial reasons.

I have had my younger one come back several times during his lifetime. It was very hard. I would not want to do it again. . . . I had to turn my one bedroom into his room. He had stuff stored all over. I'm just not the mother duckling type--I don't want to go through that again. My house is too small. Maybe if I had one of those huge homes maybe it would be different.

Respondents could foresee a family member needing to live with them. One respondent has a brother who has asked to move in, and a few respondents think it is possible grandchildren may think moving in with grandparents is an attractive alternative. When asked about living with a friend to share expenses and companionship, most did not see this as an option they would consider.

My brother has already asked me if he could live with me. He will be 41 years old. He's been divorced a couple years, and the economy is such now . . . people aren't able to afford it like they used to.

In my line of work I have a lot of customer contact, and senior citizens are finding that their grandchildren who have graduated from school, moved out of their house, couldn't afford to live on their own, don't want to go back home, and now they want to come live with grandma. . . . This is becoming a burden to the retired people. They think grandparents have a lot of money, 'I don't have to pay any rent, I can come and go as I please, they're not as restrictive,' and they're taking advantage. I see this a lot.

If you've been on your own all of your life, why would you want to move in with someone else?

If I were alone, if my husband was deceased and I had a friend in the same situation, I have a couple of good friends I would consider living with. It would be companionship; we would still have our independence. I think it would be a good thing.

Universal Design

In both groups respondents described universal design elements as appealing, and in reference to staying in their homes as they age. Some respondents were more familiar with these elements than others, and a few had already made universal design changes to their home. Many talked about aspects of universal design that they like including larger doorways, higher toilets, grab bars in showers, walk-in showers, lower counter tops, residences all on one level, and easy to grab door and cabinet handles. Some are making these changes as they remodel. Others think they will have to buy another home with these features. Some do not see the need to have these features at the present time and are not looking ahead as to when they may need them.

I think the best thing we did was to remove the bathtub. The whole family loves this now. The family is adult children. Without the tub and just having a flat shower, everybody loves this. And the high-rise toilets, everybody loves this. It's easier on the hips. Whether you're young or old, it's the way things should have been in the first place, high-rise toilets and lower counters. I've make my home totally accessible. I want to stay there, we both do. We just love our home.

I like the higher toilets, by far, and I have no problems with my knees or anything.

I think a grab bar and a built in stool in a shower is good for everybody. It will be standard eventually. . . . I think it should be standard, and they should have wider doorways. . . . Higher toilets - comfort height they call it. My son installed one because he's 6'5 and it does make a bigger difference.

You might as well prepare for the future now, rather than remodel your home in 10 or 20 years.

One size fits all.

I'm just not thinking about that right now.

In the second group, respondents offered suggestions on how to make universal design most appealing to them.

[What would make this not “old person” stuff?] If we made it look modern, as far as a stool built in to a shower area that’s supposed to be there for everybody. A lucite grab bar, not steel. Something that’s not so institutional.

[Other words that could make this design attractive to you?] Aesthetically good-looking, aesthetically invisible. Something soothing, something that gives you that feeling that has even though it has all these features but it doesn’t make you feel old.

We discussed the attractiveness of homes with two master suites, either for a couple or for living with a friend or companion. Others mentioned the possibility of “in-law suites” for parents.

That would be something I guess that I would consider. Although we both are very passionate about cooking, so we would probably need two kitchens.

We meet in the kitchen, she has her own bathroom, living room, bedroom. When she doesn't want to see anybody she just closes the door and don't go in there because she wants her time out. It works fine.

Retirement Desires

Not surprisingly, many agreed strongly that they want to stay in their homes for as long as possible. Being close to family is a consideration for some respondents in choosing where to retire, which sometimes means moving to a new location or staying in their current location. Moving to a location that has a lower cost of living is also a consideration for some.

I want to stay in my home for as long as possible, I strongly agree. I love my house.

The house we have now is fine. We'd like stay and add additions to it. The area we live in is fine. She [wife] loves to be closer to family and stuff.

I have another six years until I retire. I had planned in my own mind selling the house and moving somewhere else, but two of the daughters came back from elsewhere and now it would be awful hard to leave three daughters and their kids.

I have two grown sons in California and eventually we'd like to move back to California if we can ever afford it. . . . It's less likely now. [How is that affecting your retirement plans?] Everything's on hold.

Respondents also talked about assisted living facilities. Some respondents felt strongly that they did not want to live in a facility, even if they recognized the necessity. Others think they will make changes to their current home or buy another more accessible home where they can live. When asked, some respondents have talked to children about their wishes for retirement, but most have not.

My children, they know for one I will not go in a home. My mother was in a home with Multiple Sclerosis. You don't go into a home unless you're dying. We now are in the 21st century. There is now assisted living homes where quality of life can be maintained in a home situation. Not a nursing home.

My mother died 2 years ago, she lived on own until she was 87. She was suffering from macular degeneration and it got to the point where she couldn't see. It scared me because she would insist on doing her own cooking . . . She realized that she couldn't stay there by herself and she went into an assisted living facility. It was very nice. There was no odor. The food was good, she was well taken care of. But then she got to the point where she didn't know who she was and we had to put her in a nursing home. And even that was alright She was happy in the assisted living home, she had friends, she had her own apartment. [Has this affected how you think about for yourself?] For me, I wouldn't like it. I would miss my independence.

I'm concerned our bedroom is on the 2nd floor and I've had two knee surgeries in the last year and arthritis is setting in. I laugh because I don't think of myself being old, but it is right there. And we laugh that we're going to get one of those chairs that attaches to the side of the banister that take you up. And our laundry room is down in the basement, and there's three stairs that you constantly worry about and that will become a factor. I don't know when. Maybe in the next ten years. And we'll have to think about getting a ranch.

I haven't had the conversation with my son, I guess it's a good idea to have that conversation. My mom's still around and my mom's ok by herself. She's got her own little condo, no steps.

My youngest daughter, she's always talking about putting me in a nursing home, when the time comes. She'll jokingly tell me she'll come to visit me once in a while. I'm a little nervous about how much she actually is serious about some of the things she's said.

I'm more concerned about my parents because they're getting older. .we'll make due when the time comes. Haven't made plans.

Phase III

Combined qualitative/quantitative study: conducted by Phi Power December 2008 among 104 adults ages 44-62.

Summary

- Approximately one-half of respondents (48%) would like to continue living in their current home for as long as possible. Some respondents want to continue living in their current home because it is more affordable to do so. Respondents also cited liking the size of their current home, liking the area they live in, and being near friends and family as reasons for staying.
- More than one-third (36%) of respondents said they would like to move into another home or area in retirement. Some respondents want to move into a home that is easier to take care of, would like to live near or with family, or want to move out of their current neighborhood. Respondents who have not yet retired were particularly likely to give a variety of reasons for wanting to move, including reducing living expenses and some mentioned moving to a warmer climate.
- Many respondents said that being near friends and family greatly influences their decision of where they want to live in retirement, particularly those who want to remain in their current home. Some respondents said that being near family does not influence their decision to stay in the current home, particularly those who have not yet retired.
- Some respondents have had (or currently have) an adult child currently living with them and other respondents have also experienced children other than their own children living with them for a time. Although less prevalent, some respondents have had a parent living with them. Some enjoyed being able to spend time with their family and also appreciated additional financial or household help of their guests. Others experienced financial costs and a lack of privacy as a result of the living situation, or had difficulty in getting along with their houseguests.
- Many respondents feel either a great deal (41%) or some (43%) anxiety or pain about their current financial situation. Two-fifths has had a reduction in household income (42%), one-quarter have lost a job in their household (25%), and over one-third (37%) have had an increase in household expenses in just the last three months. The majority of respondents have reduced their everyday expenditures, including reducing housing expenditures on utilities and weather proofing their home to make it more fuel efficient. Some respondents have put off making major improvements to their home and a few have delayed the selling of their home.

Topline Findings

Two-fifths of respondents live in a suburban area (42%), just under one-third live in an urban area (31%), and just over one-quarter live in a rural area (27%).

Two-thirds of respondents (68%) live in a single-family detached home. Almost one-quarter live in an apartment or condominium (23%).

One-half of respondents (52%) live with a spouse or significant other. One-fifth (22%) live alone. Some respondents live with children, including those over age 18 (14%) and under age 18 (13%).

Table 1: Urban, Suburban, or Rural

| Area | % | N |
|----------|----|----|
| Urban | 31 | 32 |
| Suburban | 42 | 44 |
| Rural | 27 | 28 |

Table 2: Type of Housing

| Housing Type | % | N |
|-----------------------------|----|----|
| An apartment or condominium | 23 | 24 |
| Townhouse/row home | 4 | 4 |
| Twin home or duplex | 4 | 4 |
| Single-family detached home | 68 | 71 |
| Declined to answer | 1 | 1 |

Table 3: Housing Composition

| Housing composition | % | N |
|---------------------------------------|----|----|
| Live alone | 22 | 23 |
| With spouse/significant other | 52 | 54 |
| Live with adult child | 14 | 15 |
| Live with parent | 5 | 5 |
| Live with older relative (not parent) | 3 | 3 |
| Live with children/stepchildren <18 | 13 | 13 |
| Live with grandchildren <18 | 1 | 1 |
| Live with unrelated adults | 8 | 8 |
| Other | 6 | 6 |
| Declined | 1 | 1 |

Retirement and Housing Desires

Just over one-quarter of respondents (27%) are currently retired. Among those who are retired (n=28), the majority (n=18) have not moved since retirement.

Table 4: Retired

| | % | N |
|-----|----------|----------|
| Yes | 27 | 28 |
| No | 73 | 76 |

Table 5: Retired Respondents: Moved Since Retirement

| | % | N |
|-----|----------|----------|
| Yes | 36 | 10 |
| No | 64 | 18 |

All respondents were asked how they would like to live in retirement. Approximately one-half of respondents (48%) would like to continue living in their current home for as long as possible. Some respondents want to move into another home, perhaps move to another area, and some simply do not know how they would like to live in retirement.

Table 6: Desires for Living in Retirement

| | % | N |
|---|----------|----------|
| Would like to continue living in current home for as long as possible | 48 | 50 |
| Would like to move into a smaller home and/or into another area | 36 | 37 |
| Do not know | 16 | 17 |

Respondents who want to continue living in their current home gave a variety of reasons for doing so. For many, it is more affordable to stay in their current home, and in some cases they feel they are “stuck” because of their financial situation. Respondents also cited liking the size of their current home, liking the area they live in, and being near friends and family as reasons for staying. A few respondents stated that they simply do not want to move or have no reason for doing so and some said that they “love” their current home. A few respondents cited wanting to stay in their home to maintain their independence.

With the current devaluation of property we would lose money if we tried to sell. (Man, 61)

We built our home over 17 years ago. All our children have moved out and we would like something smaller but financially it isn't practical since I was forced into early retirement by my former employer. With only one income and bills to pay we can't get anything smaller with the same or smaller payments than we are already making. (Woman, 61)

It's a small house (2 bedroom) and is just the right size for me and my spouse even after my son leaves on his own. (Woman, 50)

It is small enough for me to take care of and it is in an area that is favorable to retirees. (Man, 58)

My home is paid for, it's a nice house and a wonderful community. (Man, 47)

We have a great neighborhood and have friends here and have lived here 38 years and are close to all our family. (Woman, 55)

My husband and I are both still healthy and we live in a very nice community, with good friends and neighbors, and my elderly mother is near by. (Woman, 61)

I hate moving and I have two cats that would probably not take to moving anywhere else. (Man, 62)

I love my home. (Woman, 57)

I want to remain independent and self-sufficient. (Man, 48)

Respondents who want to move into another area or home said they would like to do so because they would like a home that is easier to take care of, they would like to live near or with family, or they would like to move out of their current neighborhood. Respondents who have not yet retired were particularly likely to give a variety of reasons for wanting to move, including reducing living expenses. Some specifically mentioned moving to a warmer climate.

I'm disabled and don't need a two story house, I need a ranch. (Man, 50)

My home has 4 bedrooms and a full daylight basement. It's too much to maintain and has much more room than needed. (Woman, 57)

I would like to move into my own multifamily house in an area that is quiet and peaceful with members of my own family. (Woman, 62)

I want to move to a home near my children and grandchildren. I would like to move to a home that has a similar amount of indoor space but much

less garden area. I probably would even consider a townhouse or condo. (Woman, 58)

I live in a drug infested neighborhood. The people upstairs are very noisy over my head, and are constantly inviting insignificant others to stay for awhile. (Man, 57)

I don't want to live in the city any more with the noise, rude neighbors, crime and feeling crowded. I want to move to the mountains or a more rural area. (Woman, 51)

My reasons are basically economic. With less money I will need a cheaper place to live. (Man, 57)

We won't need that much space and would like something cheaper. (Woman, 52)

I would like to move to a warmer climate – any state would do. (Man, 49)

I want to move back to Arizona when I retire for the weather. (Man, 58)

I want to live in an area where I will not have to shovel snow. (Man, 45)

Respondents were asked specifically if being near family and friends greatly, somewhat, or not at all affected their decision to either stay in their current home or to move. Many respondents said that being near friends and family greatly influences their decision, particularly those who want to remain in their current home. Interestingly, some respondents who initially gave different reasons for wanting to stay in their home also responded that being near friends and family greatly influenced their decision to stay. Fewer respondents said that being near friends and family influences their decision to *some* extent, but not greatly. Some respondents said that being near family does not influence their decision to stay in the current home, particularly those who have not yet retired. Some respondents said that being near family is a large part of their wanting to move into another home or area.

I live a couple of miles from my son and his two children and only 50 miles from my daughter and her daughter. One of the reasons I chose this house was the location. (Woman, 53)

Yes, we want to always be close to family. We have 4 grandchildren and they are close and my dad lives next door and other relatives and friends are very close. (Woman, 55)

Yes-being near family and friends definitely does influence this decision. My mom is fairly near by and will need support as she gets older. (Woman, 52)

Yes [I want to move because] all my family and friend live 100+ miles from where I live now. (Man, 50)

Yes [I want to move because] I have to live close enough to my daughter for transportation to shopping and doctors. (Man, 62)

Yes, [being near friends and family influences my decision] somewhat....I would like to live near my grandchildren so if my children decide to stay here in New York that may change my plans... (Woman, 46)

No, being near family or friends doesn't influence any decisions I make. (Woman, 57)

Respondents who are married (or living as married) were asked whether their spouse feels the same way as they do about their desires for retirement living. The majority responded that their respondent feels the same way about where to live in retirement.

Table 7: Does your spouse or significant other agree?

| | % | N |
|------------|----------|----------|
| Yes | 78 | 42 |
| No | 15 | 8 |
| Don't know | 7 | 4 |

A few respondents said that their spouse feels differently about where to live in retirement. When asked how they are resolving this difference, a few said that their financial situation will determine their choice, a few are still at an impasse, and a few will stay in their current home since they cannot agree on where to live.

Hopefully we will win the lotto and resolve both issues, till then our finances have an extreme say in where, when, and how we deal. (Man, 58)

He would rather go north in the summer and go south in the winter; I would rather go south year round. (Woman, 49)

We will negotiate a solution when the time is right. (Man, 57)

Housing Changes, Modifications, and Updates

Respondents who said they wanted to stay in their homes for as long as possible were asked if they plan to make changes, modifications, or updates to their home.

Approximately half of these respondents (n=23) plan to make some changes. When given a list of the changes they might make, the most frequently selected response was to modify a bathroom (n=8).

Table 8: Making Changes to Housing

| | % | N |
|------------|----------|----------|
| Yes | 46 | 23 |
| No | 38 | 19 |
| Don't know | 16 | 8 |

Respondents who said they wanted to move into another home were asked in what ways they would like their retirement home to be different from their current home. Many said they would like their home to be smaller, sometimes for less maintenance, and some also specified they would like a home on one-level. Some respondents said they would like “more” room, but the extra room they needed sometimes means more land, living on their own, or having room for a special hobby (and not necessarily a larger home). Respondents also cited a variety of attributes they are looking for including a better climate, a better neighborhood, closer to places they need to get to and public transportation.

I live in a 5 bedroom house right now, I don't need that much room and I need something a little smaller. (Woman, 55)

I would like something a little smaller with less yard and maintenance needs. (Woman, 45)

I would like it to be in a rural area so that I have room to do what I want. (Man, 45)

I would like to have my own place and not share a house. (Man, 62)

I would like my home to be on one level instead of the three that it now is – or maybe limit it to two levels. I would like a very small or no yard for retirement. I would like my home to be near walking paths and shopping and health facilities. (Woman, 58)

No upstairs and better climate year round not too hot and not too cold temperature is average 72 degrees. (Man, 61)

Sharing Housing with Family

A total of 15 respondents currently have an adult child living with them and an additional 31 respondents have had an adult child come back to live with them after leaving home. Some respondents have also experienced children other than their own children living with them for a time and/or a parent living with them. Not surprisingly, some respondents had parents live with them because of health concerns.

He has dementia and can't live alone. (Woman, 57)

[They lived with me] because of their illness and needed help on a daily basis. (Woman, 57)

Respondents were asked what was/is the positive impact of their family living with them. Some enjoyed being able to spend time with their family and generally enjoyed having company. Some received financial help or were glad to provide needed financial assistance and a few said those living with them helped generally around the house.

My daughter and 3 grandchildren lived with me for a little more than a year. It was very busy and lively. It gave me the opportunity to get close to my grandchildren. (Woman, 51)

Great company, she is lots of fun and she is getting the benefit of completing her college education without additional financial stress. She helps out when asked and she is a delightful person who is willing to go and do things. (Woman, 55)

My wife and myself have been blessed to have the opportunity to see our child mature and make plans to obtain his own home. (Man, 48)

I have an adult child currently living with me. It provides company other than my husband and gives me comfort to know that they are safe. (Woman, 51)

They helped me financially so all the burden of bills would not all fall upon me. (Woman, 57)

I was not married at the time; enjoyed the company and the help with the bills. (Woman, 51)

It's always welcome and nice whenever any of our children are around. We were able to help her when she needed the help. (Woman, 51)

Respondents experienced a variety of negative impacts of housing family members. Many experienced financial costs and a lack of privacy as a result of the living situation, and respondents expressed strong negative emotions in relating their experiences.

Respondents specifically talked about the difficulty in getting along with their houseguests (both adult children and parents). Some said that there were no negative effects of the living situation.

The utility bills were much higher. (Woman, 57)

Free loading off of me by not helping with finances. (Man, 57)

Expenses were greater, space was less and privacy was almost non-existent. (Woman, 55)

Sometimes arguments would break out and it would feel as though living in a box with no way out. (Woman, 57)

We fight all the time. (Woman, 48)

Some respondents had to make changes to their homes to accommodate an older relative, primarily bathroom modifications. Very few changes had to be made to accommodate an adult child or grandchildren.

Hand rails in shower, hospital toilet, handrails on both sides of stairs, basement remodeled. (Man, 58)

Put railing up in bathroom, a raised toilet seat, a grab bar outside the backdoor, a chair that electrically raises a person. (Woman, 57)

Economy and Housing

The majority of respondents (85%) feel either a great deal (41%) or some (43%) anxiety or pain about their current financial situation. These fears are not unwarranted as two-fifths has had a reduction in household income (42%), one-quarter have lost a job in their household (25%), and over one-third (37%) have had an increase in household expenses in just the last three months.

Table 9: Affects of Economy on Housing Decisions

| | % | N |
|--------------------------------|----------|----------|
| Total Yes | 61 | 63 |
| Yes, have changed plans | 16 | 17 |
| Yes, have cut back on expenses | 53 | 55 |
| No | 38 | 39 |
| Don't know | 2 | 2 |

Table 10: Anxiety or Pain about Financial Situation

| | % | N |
|---|----------|----------|
| Total feeling anxiety or pain | 85 | 88 |
| Feeling a great deal of anxiety or pain | 41 | 43 |
| Feeling some anxiety or pain | 43 | 45 |
| Not feeling anxiety or pain | 14 | 14 |
| Can't decide | 2 | 2 |

Table 11: Household Experienced in Last Three Months

| | % | N |
|---|----------|----------|
| Lost a job | 25 | 26 |
| Reduction in income | 42 | 44 |
| Increase in household expenses | 37 | 38 |
| Moved in with others for financial reasons | 1 | 1 |
| Had someone move in for financial reasons | 7 | 7 |
| Cut back on purchasing clothes | 54 | 56 |
| Cut back on necessities (food, heat, medicine) | 39 | 40 |
| Forced to retire | 5 | 5 |
| Provided financial assistance to friend in need | 16 | 17 |
| Received financial assistance because of need | 11 | 11 |
| Did not answer | 3 | 3 |
| None of the above | 20 | 21 |

When asked how their housing plans and expenditures have been altered because of the economy, the majority of respondents cited ways in which they have reduced their everyday expenditures, many reducing spending to the essentials. Respondents specifically talked about reducing housing expenditures on utilities, cable television, not purchasing furniture or home goods, and weather proofing their home to make it more fuel efficient.

I don't spend as much, I cut coupons, and I try to conserve on energy.
(Woman, 46)

Stop all spending other than basic needs. (Man, 45)

Eating out less, not buying a lot of clothes, not shopping much. Cut back in all areas. Only buying what is absolutely needed. (Woman, 56)

Heat and air have been cut off in 3 rooms. Air conditioning was not used this year. Commodes only flushed when odor presents a problem. No cable or sat. tv. (Man, 61)

Trying to weatherize and make it more fuel efficient. (Man, 49)

Have insulated the windows more. Also got an electric heater to supplement the furnace. Keeping more areas not heated like we used to. Not putting up Christmas lights like we used to. (Woman, 54)

Some respondents have put off making major improvements to their home and a few have delayed the selling of their home.

Put off scheduled repairs, and hoped for additions to the building, put off replacing worn flooring for stone tile type floors. (Man, 58)

We were planning to move but that is on hold. (Man, 50)